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The Gothic Elements in Grigorios Xenopoulos' Novel *Teresa Varma-Dakosta*

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The purpose of the paper is mainly to pinpoint, examine and elaborate on the Gothic elements that are disseminated in Grigorios Xenopoulos' novel *Teresa Varma-Dakosta*. Teresa's physical and mental transformation is connected to the Count Varma's old house because this place has a negative effect on her as it provokes a sense of fear and extreme anxiety. Moreover, the medieval environment of the house brings to the surface her latent abominable desires that can lead her to murder. The only thing that remains unchanged after living in the old palace is Teresa's political and social beliefs. Being aristocrat by nature, she believes that the French Revolution was pointless and she is convinced that what is right by nature can be re-established. Teresa's intricate personality, which is revealed in the Gothic ambience of the old house, concentrates several traits of the male villains of the traditional Gothic novels.

The word Gothic,¹ first applied to architecture, makes its appearance in literature as a kind of counterfeit medievalism or as a medieval revival. The Gothic literature appears in the West, when the oldest structures of social hierarchies, predominantly consisted of the hereditary aristocrats (symbolised by their castles), are starting to debilitate and decay. This situation produces at the same time a sense of liberation from the rational Enlightenment² that toppled the older orders, and a feeling of uncertainty derived from men's existential anxiety about where they really come from and the orders they belong to. It is the eighteenth-century Europe's religious, political and social background that serves as an impetus for this movement.³

On a more theoretical level, Edmund Burke's treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) associates sublime with

¹ For the origins of the Gothic, see Montague Summers, 1964:17–59.

² For the relationship between the rise of the Gothic novel and Enlightenment, see David Punter, 1980:26–27.

³ For the reasons of the revival of the Gothic in England, see David Punter and Byron Glennis, 2004:9.

feelings stimulated by terror or with highly dramatic incidents in which a sense of awe is generated. This view finds its application in mid-eighteenth-century Gothic literature where a representation of different states of terror is provided. Moreover, the early Gothic seems to be highly based on formulas, as the settings are usually castles, monasteries, ruins, with characters such as aristocrats, monks or nuns. Although the Gothic is generated in different genres and national or social contexts, it possesses some motifs that characterise the form, such as images of monstrosity or insanity, the supernatural, the appearance of ghosts and terrifying experiences connected with secret passageways, traps, labyrinths or graveyards.

Several characteristics of the western Gothic novel are met in Xenopoulos' novel *A Modern Middle Ages, Teresa Varma-Dakosta* which first appeared in the newspaper *Ethnos* in 1925.⁴ The novel is dedicated to Costas Oikonomidis, editor of the newspaper *Ethnos* and theatre critic.⁵ In the dedication, the writer explains how Oikonomidis urged him to write about a girl who should be different from the other girls he had written so far, more powerful, more tragic that could be led to crime. His request made Xenopoulos recall the old legend of Teresa Varma-Dakosta and offer him her portray.

The old house of Count Varmas

Teresa's first appearance in the novel is in the second chapter when she and her mother Marina meet Stephanos, the young lawyer who has just returned to his homeland after finishing his studies in Italy. His first thought on seeing Teresa is her beauty, but he gets afraid by looking her eyes: "Oh! How beautiful she is! In a moment I got afraid when I saw her horrifying, big eyes!"⁶ (p. 36). This feeling of horror follows him till the end of the novel. Some days later, he goes to Teresa's house, which is described in detail:

It was a common three-storey building, with balconies, without external pillars, big, white, sunny, overt, pleasant. The stone stairs on the front door were shining, its bronze ornaments were sparkling, but there was neither escutcheon nor coat of arms above it. (...) The house was tastefully and luxuriously decorated, but everything was new, usual, insignificant. I had nothing to pry in there. I could see something similar everywhere, even in my house... (pp. 28–29)

This house is completely different from the old house that Count Federico, Teresa's grandfather, lives:

⁴ Xenopoulos' novel appeared in the newspaper *Ethnos* from 24/4/1925 to 24/7/1925. The book was published one year later (1926). For the only critical review of the book, as Xenopoulos reveals, see Helias Voutieridis, 1927:376–378.

⁵ For the title of the novel, see Georgia Farinou-Malamatari, 2001:389.

⁶ Grigorios Xenopoulos, *Teresa Varma-Dakosta* (Τερέζα Βάρμα-Δακόστα). Athens: Vlassis Bros, 1984. From now on the pages mentioned refer to this edition. The extracts of the novel have been translated into English by the author of the paper.

And it's true that we all called medieval the old house of Count Federico Varmas, the unshakable ruined building, whose view only brought to our minds the Middle Ages, as we knew it less from history and more from romances. (...) At dawn I opened the grilles of my room and looked at the black-yellowish façade pierced by two vast rows of closed windows (...) or at night, when I turned back home, I saw from distance the size of the palace with the squat pillars, silver-coloured by the desert moon- I imagined knights, chatelaines, bodyguards and young boys, astrologers and dwarves. (...) In the façade, every window had a pillar beneath it and above it there was the loft of the attic. The cloister could open, be cut in the middle and it coved the front gate, which was vaulted like the windows-only the lofts were square- oak, heavy, dark, with many bronze ornaments that weren't sparkling anymore, and with the Varmas' family coat of arms in the middle of the dome. (...) Was it the blackened portraits with engraved frames that preserved nothing from their old gilding and they showed only pale faces and fierce eyes in the darkness? Or was it the bald landlord with the thick head (...) that you could tell he had come out of a painting? (...) We were passing endless corridors, we were going up and down the stairs, we were unlocking doors with difficulty, (...) and all that in the dark! I only had a vague, confusing but always horrible impression of a labyrinth. If I had been left there alone, I would have been lost. I had never thought that the interior of the palace would be so big, mazing, obscure and black! Sometimes I suffocated. Sometimes I was really afraid especially when I was feeling the crumbling floor of a corridor trembling and sinking under my feet. (...) Sometimes I could discern dusty spiders on the walls (...) and when we opened the window of the parlour that looked out on the orchard, I clearly saw two black bats that flew out in the evening. (pp. 9-11, 18-21)

The old house of Varmas is a spooky, obscure, place connected to a dark, distant past. It is a place that can generate feelings of fear. Both the architecture and the inner decoration of the old house recalls descriptions of Gothic novels' castles such as Udolpho in Ann Radcliffe's novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* ([1794] 1836:110-111) or the castle in Horace Walpole's *The Castle Of Otranto* ([1764] 1964:25-26). Moreover, the Varmas' lineage presented in detail traces back to the fifteenth century when the first ancestor of the family came to the island of Zakynthos from Venice and built the palace. Thus, its inhabitants, living there for over four centuries, have assimilated the qualities or the perversions of their dwelling. Stephanos, while examining the old house, notices a wall that was weirdly bloated from moisture and asks Count Federico about it. His answer leaves the narrator petrified as he learns that a person might have been built alive into it: "— Joanes says that at that time — God knows when — someone had been built alive into that wall" (p. 22).

Therefore, the old house has connected its history with a dreadful legend that could be seen as a curse. An effective use of this motif is found in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, in which all the legends connected with the curse of the house are qualified as being rumours or superstition. A striking, even though metaphorically used, conflation between building and lineage is analysed further when Judge Pyncheon's character is compared with a stable edifice:

Behold, therefore, a palace. Its splendid halls, and suites of spacious apartments, are floored with a mosaic-work of costly marbles. (...) With what fairer and nobler emblem

could any man desire to shadow forth his character? Ah! But in some low and obscure nook (...) or beneath the marble pavement in a stagnant water-puddle, with the richest pattern of mosaic-work above may lie a corpse, half-decayed, and still decaying, and diffusing its death-scent all through the palace!⁷

This correlation between the anthropomorphic depiction of the house and the lineage of its inhabitants is an issue that can also be encountered in *Teresa Varma-Dakosta*.

Teresa's transformation in the old house

The stage of fear

When Teresa's father, the lawyer Dakostas, starts a relationship with his maid, Anna, Teresa and her mother, Marina, are compelled to leave their house. They move to Varmas' palace hoping that the present situation might change and they can return to their previous lives. When Teresa starts living in her grandfather's house, she gets afraid of everything that exists in it, because its bad condition affects her inner world:

She was leaving because she was afraid that the old house might collapse on her head or because its bad condition disturbed her. I saw her in front of me bareheaded, with entangled hair, neglected, with an old everyday dress (...) and pale, sickly, with her reddish eyes like she had been crying, with a frightening expression on her face, and with a low-pitched, whispering voice. (pp. 109–110)

Her physical appearance has also changed reflecting the poor state of the building in which she is obliged to live. Besides her sickly appearance, Teresa feels an intense fear every time she hears a weird noise:

The fear that had conquered her in that medieval house was nondescript, invincible, consecutive; it appeared to be the most powerful feeling in her new life, as it was apparent in her terrified, lamentable look. (...) She sometimes thought that the foundations of the house were going to collapse, or that the house was full of silent ghosts, or that it echoed screams of unseen spirits, or that robbers and murderers conquered it. (...) Sometimes, in that house she appeared to be losing her mind. (...) And the wind, passing through the numerous holes of that ruined old house, sighed, moaned, whistled; it was pouring with rain and as it hurled against the panes, the tiles, the pavements, its dripping echoed rhythmically and monotonously in the rooms and in the corridors like notes of instruments that spirits were playing. (pp. 120–121, 123, 127)

Although the terrifying experiences in the dilapidated house can have a logical explanation, even the narrator (Stephanos) who is sensible and self-composed, gets a chill and hesitates⁸ about things when he enters Varmas' house at night. The house

⁷ Nathaniel Hawthorne, [1851] 1950:238. For the haunted houses and family curses, see Robert Mighall, 1999:78–129.

⁸ For the connection between the instant feeling of hesitation and the term *Fantastic* as well as for the definition of the terms *Uncanny* and *Marvelous* as used in literature, see Tzvetan Todorov, 1970:46–62.

influences so deeply the clarity of his thought that once he experienced a bizarre situation when he noticed that the eyes of a man portrayed on a painting were moving:

Although that immeasurable fear turned out to be ridiculous, it wasn't unreasonable. Personally, on seeing the old house of Varmas for the first time at night, I got afraid. The darkness seemed murkier, heavier, and more evocative. And as we were passing the grand parlour, in the dim twinkling light of the candle that was creating moving shadows and reddish sparkles, just for a moment, it seemed that the eyes of Count Borri, the ancestor portrayed on the painting, flashed from the blackness of the background, moved like being alive and stared at me angrily. (p. 121)

Optical illusions or even accidents connected with paintings are common in Gothic novels as they function as a means not only for provoking fear but also for intertwining the house with the fate of its inhabitants. In Walpole's Gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto*, Manfred's grandfather who is portrayed on a painting starts to sigh and move.⁹ In the "Family Portraits" of the *Tales of the Dead: The Ghost Stories of the Villa Diodati* the portraits of the house are associated with the family curse. One of them, which has supernatural powers, dates from the tenth century and causes the death of a young girl by falling on her.¹⁰

Teresa associates her ancestors' portraits hung on the walls with the graveyard located in the church's orchard, which belongs to the palace. The window of her room overlooks the orchard where the white tombstones are visible and she erroneously believes that her ancestors, who in reality were buried in the countryside, get out of their tombs at night and they visit the palace as ghosts: "She imagined that her distant ancestors were getting out of the tombs that she could see over there and in those horrible winter nights they were wandering in the haunted palace as ghosts..." (p. 128).

Ghosts wandering in houses, appearing or even speaking to people are common in Gothic or Victorian writing where they sometimes combine both materiality and incorporeal presence.¹¹ In Xenopoulos' novel *The Ghost*, Helena, married to Giorgis, sees the ghost of Konstantis every night before she goes to bed. Konstantis who was once in love with her appears dressed in black and his image is similar to the one he had when he was alive. Helena can speak to him, quarrel with him, even touch him and she is not the only person who can see him as her mother gets a glimpse of him once.¹²

⁹ "Unable to keep his eyes from the picture, which began to move (...) Ere he could finish the sentence the vision sighed again, and made a sigh to Manfred to follow him." Horace Walpole, [1764] 1964:23–24.

¹⁰ "On a sudden she found herself (...), in the room where the unfortunate portrait was placed. (...) but at the moment this unfortunate girl was striving to get out of the room (...), the portrait fell; and Juliana, thrown down by her fear, and overpowered by the heavy weight of the picture, never rose more. (...) I have also seen the picture (...) Its look (...) has such infinite attractions, that it appears that the eyes move and have life." Sarah-Elisabeth Utterson (trans.), *Tales of the Dead*, 1813:12–13.

¹¹ For the theme of ghosts in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century literature and mental science, see Hilary Crimes, *Late Victorian Gothic: Mental Science, the Uncanny and Sciences of Writing*, 2006; Julian Wolfrey, *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature*, 2002.

¹² "He could see him not only when she was sleeping but also when she was awake. And now it was worse

For Teresa, the main root of fear, illusion or hallucination is the old house of Varmas. This uncanny feeling that is generated when weird or frightening things happen can change after a while. Freud in his treatise "The Uncanny" (1919) tries to define the word *uncanny* (*unheimlich*), which is related to what arouses dread or horror and exists in opposition to *homely* (*heimlich*). Nevertheless, these two terms can slip into each other, as the meaning of *homely* becomes ambivalent and in some way or another can even coincide with *uncanny*. Using as an example the myth of Oedipus, he highlights that "for this *uncanny* is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression".¹³

The home becomes for Freud a place where Oedipal anxieties are generated and it cannot be considered a safe environment, as it involves latent abominable desires and repressed feelings that evoke repulsion, fear and horror. Furthermore, Freud continues, there are some possibilities that once were realities. Although nowadays people have rejected them and regard them as superstitions, there remains a feeling of uncertainty for the new beliefs and the old ones are ready to seize every opportunity given to confirm. When something happens in people's life that seems to confirm the old, abandoned beliefs, the feeling of the *uncanny* is formed. Only people who have completely freed themselves of that kind of animistic beliefs stay indifferent to that feeling.¹⁴ The old house once provoking fear and abhorrence, as it was not, in the Freudian concept, a safe place for Teresa now it is a place that she is familiar with.

The stage of familiarisation

Teresa's repressed beliefs that come to the surface make her have the feeling of the *uncanny* when she starts living in the old house, but after a while she gets accustomed to the new environment and she leaves her fears behind as the constant discovery of items hidden in the old house captivates her curiosity. She starts searching in deserted rooms, basements and attics where she finds long forgotten things and among them a Toledo dagger that she describes to Stephanos in detail, telling him that the chatelaines might have killed their lovers with it. This is the first time that the narrator realises Teresa's gradual transformation into a medieval girl. A few days later, he also sees her in a medieval-like violet silk robe that makes her seem like a real chatelaine:

than before because besides the fact that she could see him, listen to him, speak to him, she could also touch him with her hands! (...) For some seconds, Helena, awake, felt in her hands the resistance of something solid. It was not the wind; it was a body, a man, alive, flesh and bone. (...) Mataragaina (Helena's mother) saw the ghost of Kostantis." Grigorios Xenopoulos, *The Ghost*, 1984:57-58. This novel first appeared in the newspaper *Ethnos* from 7/4/1914 to 21/7/1914.

¹³ Sigmund Freud, 2001:241.

¹⁴ "As soon as something actually happens in our lives, which seems to confirm the old, discarded beliefs we get a feeling of the *uncanny*. (...) Conversely, anyone who has completely and finally rid himself of animistic beliefs will be insensible to this type of the *uncanny*." *ibid.*, pp. 247-248.

And she laughed so differently, that she made me think that in the medieval building, Teresa started transforming into a ... medieval girl. (...) Teresa introduced herself suddenly wearing a dress that completely transformed her. It was an old domestic robe that was like a vestment. (...) You could see a real chatelaine. (pp. 130–131)

Her transformation that starts being apparent in her appearance sinks into her inner world. After reading some medieval romances she found in her grandfather's library, she wants to put into effect what she has read. She lusts for revenge, and she tries to find ways to murder Anna, the maid with whom her father has a love affair, because she is the reason of Teresa's misfortune. Her unconfined imagination makes her believe that a trapdoor, which she accidentally found, was used for murdering people by throwing them in. Stephanos' logical explanation that it was probably used for storing things doesn't convince her. The medieval atmosphere, in which she is obliged to live, has a menacing impact on her disposition:

Something dark, tough, fierce, rough appeared in her soul. The impact of that ambience in which a misfortune had suddenly thrown her, speeded up the manifestation of atavism that probably was to come later or never. (p. 140)

Her incarceration in the old house makes her passions spring up as her repressed sensuality rules her existence and she starts a morbid game of instinctive imposition and sexual dominance: "Besides all the other wild feelings, an untamed awakening of dark desires and instincts had taken over her in the medieval house" (p. 143).

Dominated by her uncontrolled instincts, she starts a love affair with a handsome barber boy, and when she satisfies her passions, she decides to get rid of him by throwing him in the trapdoor of Varmas' house. His disappearance makes Stephanos worry as he connects it with the barber's relationship with Teresa. The narrator finds out the truth as Teresa reveals him what she has done. Fortunately, the boy didn't die, and Teresa decides to commence a new relationship with Stephanos because she is afraid that he will divulge her secret. Some days later, Teresa regrets not having killed Kyriakos, the barber boy, and she tries to persuade Stephanos to murder him together because she believes that sooner or later Kyriakos will blackmail her. Stephanos decides to tell the truth to Kyriakos and persuades him to leave. One night while Stephanos is sleeping on the couch she attempts to murder him with the Toledo dagger, but he wakes up just in time to escape:

On opening my eyes, I saw something, in the dim light of the lamp that was like another light, like a glow or flash; it was from the steel of a blade and from two pupils of eyes. Teresa, unrecognisable, with a horrible expression of ferocity, standing above me, was holding tightly in her hand the Toledo dagger and she was on the point of stabbing me in the heart. (pp. 186–187)

Teresa's mental instability becomes obvious after having been dominated by her once suppressed instincts. Her deviance is aligned to her insatiable physical desire, which could have as a result her mental disturbance. As Elaine Showalter claims "In contrast to the rather vague and uncertain concepts of insanity in general which

Victorian Psychiatry produced, theories of female insanity were specifically and confidently linked to the biological crises of the female life-cycle (...) during which the mind would be weakened and the symptoms of insanity might emerge” (1987:55).

The female body is physically unstable and the individual that possesses it can consequently be erratic and inconstant. Michel Foucault describes the *Hysterization* of women's body that occurred at the end of the nineteenth century as “A process whereby the feminine body was analysed (...) as being thoroughly saturated with sexuality”. Teresa's corporal desires lead her to extremely gruesome acts as she attempts to murder both men to whom she is emotionally attached. Kelly Hurley argues that “This is perhaps the most important point in reference to the fin-de-siècle Gothic — the disorders of the female body were inextricably linked to the reproductive system, so that female sexuality emerged as both casual and symptomatic of female abhumanity” (1996:120).

Teresa's perversion deeply affects the two men that are connected with her because there seems to be a kind of deterioration in their mentality and an alteration in their physical appearance.¹⁵ Stephanos notices the dramatic change in Kyriakos' appearance after his relationship with Teresa:

I could still see him as I had seen him leaving in the moonlight that night: ugly, weakened, cowered, pale, with frail eyes, without his adolescent liveliness that once made him look marvellous. (...) I imagined Teresa sticking her mouth to her body, suckling his vein after having bitten it, sucking his blood, like an immense bat. That is the reason why he seemed so pale, dull, cowered. And Lamia that had sucked his beauty, threatened once again his life. (p. 173)

Even though that female vampirism is a figment of Stephanos' imagination, Teresa's extravagance of passions can alienate the image of Kyriakos. The barber boy being captivated by her beauty becomes repelled by her perilous behaviour, as her encounter could lead him to death. The female body is a site of depravity and peril because both men are subject to precarious situations. Her female monstrosity is associated with the pose of a spider that always prays and the image of two mythical creatures Lamia and Medusa, revealing the vileness of her character. In Matthew P. Shiel, “Huguenin's Wife” (1895), Andromeda captivates her husband with her beauty but she is later transformed into an insatiable, devious woman who oppresses Huguenin's life. She is also described as Lamia and when the narrator stands in front of Andromeda's portrait his impression is: “The Gorgon's head! Whose hair was snakes; and I thought of this I thought, too, of how from the guttering gore of the Gorgon's head monsters rose.”¹⁶

After Teresa's attempt to murder Stephanos, he leaves her house feeling disillusioned but liberated for the first time. He is overwhelmed by fear thinking about his

¹⁵ For the different emotional behaviour in intimate relationships that exists between sexes as it is described in Xenopoulos' prose, see Vangelis Athanasopoulos, 2003:64.

¹⁶ Matthew P. Shiel, n.d. [1911], p. 196.

appalling experience. He describes her as Medusa whose beauty makes her even more vicious and resentful: “In my eyes, her beauty, unchangeable, made her even more appalling, more horrible. She reminded me of Medusa and it seemed to me that she also had golden live snakes” (p. 189).

While leaving the old house, the narrator describes it as being a horrible bronze-faced giant with many eyes and mouths, who chased him like a ghost in order to fall upon him. Teresa is associated with the old house as she is completely incorporated into it, adopting its wretchedness:

In my eyes, its black façade made grimaces like a wicked and dreadful bronze-faced Giant, with many eyes and mouths. (...) I was running and the whole palace, with the church and the wall-surrounding orchard, was running after me in order to catch me, like an immense, most supernatural ghost, oblique, slanted, dilapidated, ready to fall upon me. Teresa nestling into it was now its soul. She breathed a new life in it, she haunted it, she turned it against me. (p. 189)

The old house obtains human traits while Teresa entrenches herself in it, becoming an indispensable part of its ambience. Robert Mighall, trying to illuminate this interrelation between old houses and their inhabitants, highlights that “if buildings can ‘ooze’ with human memories it is only fair that long-dwelling inhabitants should acquire architectural maladies”.¹⁷ This deep connection that is developed between old houses and their dwellers insinuates Teresa’s attachment to Varmas’ house, which distorts her inner self and leads her to live in total isolation. Being secluded in the medieval house, she cuts off any connection from the real world and she experiences a modern Middle Ages as the title indicates.

Teresa’s political and social beliefs: French Revolution and Aristocracy

What remains unchanged after living in Varmas’ house is Teresa’s political and social convictions. Being an aristocrat by nature, she advocates the privileges of her class in the expense of the lower social classes. She believes that the French Revolution was not only a pointless and absurd but also an unfair and savage endeavour that disturbed the world’s political order and brought about radical but at the same time chaotic changes:

- Did you like it?
- What?
- The French Revolution.
- Not at all. It entertained me of course, but I didn’t like it at all! (...)
- And why?
- Why? That’s funny! But who is fond of such frenzy, slaughter or horror? ...

¹⁷ Robert Mighall, “Haunted Houses I and II”, 1999:86.

- Yes, but the result?
- Pointless or it's better to say pointless and bloody! They disturbed both France and the whole world; they killed the King and the Queen, thousand aristocrats and noblemen. What did they manage to do with all that? Democracy succeeded Aristocracy!
- But now they are for Democracy...
- No way! There are going to change it again in order to bring a King or an Emperor. (...) The English Revolution was unnecessary, and the French one too, all of them. (pp. 32–33)

Her views are not far away from the ones that are usually presented implicitly rather than explicitly in Gothic novels whose popularity was connected with the social and political turbulences after the end of the French Revolution.¹⁸

In Walpole's *The Castle Of Otranto* Manfred, like Teresa, is convinced that he should do anything he could in order to keep untouched his family property. He sacrifices his own children so as to retain his fortune, whereas Teresa is ready to get married to Giorgakis Sirmas, a young but sickly aristocrat, in order to remain to the aristocratic class and at the same time to augment her property. Both of them are attached to the *ancien régime*, while Stephanos Aggelikopoulos, a middle-class lawyer is a socialist¹⁹ and in favour of any act of liberation. Teresa believes that the French Revolution created unjust laws and led the world to great upheaval as people tried to change the settled social order and when they came into power, they were inclined to change the political order once again. Her political thoughts are in accordance with the ones of Edmund Burke, who argues that the result of the French Revolution is that the ones who fought against monarchy, they finally became greater tyrant themselves.²⁰

Teresa's opinion for her class is that they are a distinguishable race by nature. They are considered as the ornament of the place where they live on the grounds that they constitute a superior class of Humanity, having different moral values from the others. Even though every change in the traditional social order is unnatural and based on violent actions, she is convinced that what is right by nature can be re-established. Edmund Burke has almost the same beliefs as he highlights that the nobility should keep what rightfully belongs to them and describes them as the ornaments of the civil order.²¹

When Teresa expresses for the first time her beliefs about the French Revolution, she actually answers Stephanos' question about which is her favourite subject. The

¹⁸ Ronald Paulson, "Gothic Fiction and French Revolution", 1981:536.

¹⁹ For socialism in Xenopoulos' prose, see Dionysis K. Magkliveras, 2001:92–113

²⁰ "The sophistic tyrants of Paris are loud in their declamations against the departed regal tyrant, (...) Shall we be more tender of the tyrants of our own time, when we see them acting worse tragedies under our eyes?" Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, [1790] 1951:103–104.

²¹ "Nobility is a graceful ornament to the civil order. It is the Corinthian capital of polished society." *ibid.*, p. 135.

answer is History, something that surprises him as he thinks that History is a subject related to real facts, so it belongs more to the sphere of men's interests, whereas it is more appropriate for a girl to be fond of Literature. While living in her father's new house, she prefers to discuss with other people rather than read books. However, when she starts living in her grandfather's old house, she gets secluded as she loses contact with reality. Reading chivalric romances makes her feel completely familiar with the environment of the house and she wants to put into effect stories of obscure love and abhorrent crimes that hold a fascination for her: "With all these things she kindled her imagination, as her inert mind had no need of stimulation" (p. 133).

However, her political ideas remain the same and at any given opportunity she expresses her disapproval of the French Revolution, which is always associated with history and law. In Jane Austen's novel, *Northanger Abbey* ([1818] 2004), Henry Tinley expresses that he loves reading history, while Catherine Morland is fond of reading Gothic novels. His perception of the world seems more realistic while hers more fictitious, as an incident or even an object becomes ambiguous due to the fact that each person transcribes it in their mind in a way that corresponds to how they understand the world. There obviously exists a distinction between Gothic fiction and history (related to reality), but also a similarity, as General Tinley, Henry Tinley's father, concentrates all the traits that Gothic villains possess: a man that is determined to preserve his family fortune and wealth at any cost; a man who can act mercilessly to a person that belongs to an inferior social class or possess no property.

In Xenopoulos' novel, Teresa combines what in *Northanger Abbey* remains a distinctive trait between the two sexes because Henry Tinley is fond of history whereas Catherine Morland is keen on reading novels. Moreover, Teresa, like General Tinley, concentrates the traits of the wicked Gothic characters as she tries unscrupulously to preserve the family name and fortune; she tortures other people who belong to an inferior class and she can even commit a crime if someone tries to disturb her social status. Although being a woman, she concentrates all the vicious male characteristics of several traditional Gothic novels. In *Teresa Varma-Dakosta* there seems to be an interchangeability of roles in the different sexes: Teresa takes the role of her father when he starts a relationship with his maid Anna and Teresa is obliged to leave her house; Kyriakos, the barber boy is Anna's counterpart, as Stephanos once observed: "And I don't know why but she (Anna) reminded me of Kyriakos, the charming barber boy of my neighbourhood" (p. 29).

When Teresa ends her relationship with Kyriakos, Stephanos takes his place and Teresa declares that "I will stay with you as long as Dakostas has a relationship with Anna" (p. 183). This statement is indicative of the connection that exists in these two parallel relationships and the juxtaposition of the roles of the different sexes: Teresa/Dakostas – Stephanos/Anna.

Teresa Varma-Dakosta remains an intricate personality, which concentrates controversial traits concerning her physical appearance and her state of mind. Her complexity of character is even more evident by the time she begins to dwell in the

old house as her repressed fears and desires become apparent. On the other hand, Stephanos, the narrator of the novel, is generally governed by rationality, even when he is afraid or lusts for Teresa. The Gothic features, which can be encountered in western Gothic literature, are disseminated throughout the novel: the medieval old house which exerts its supernatural power on its inhabitants, the secret trapdoor and the Toledo dagger that are associated with murder, the graveyard where the family's ancestors are supposedly buried and they wander around as ghosts, the medieval clothes that Teresa wears and the excess in use of the words *φόβος* (fear) and *φοβάμαι* (be afraid). The Freudian psychoanalytic treatise for the *uncanny*, which is regarded as an attempt to understand the psychological intricacies that are common in Gothic literature, can also be used in the case of *Teresa Varma-Dakosta*. Therefore the Gothic elements constitute the ambience that triggers Teresa's imagination and presumably provokes her mental disturbance, while it generates the acts of individuals rationalising the obscurity that veils their thoughts.

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